

March 1, 2016

Senator Larson, Co-Chairman Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Representative Dargan, Co-Chairman Select Committee on Veterans' affairs

**SUBJ: Raised House Bill #5406 – AN ACT PERMITTING PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL TO USE BLUE LIGHTS**

My name is Ted Schroll, Legislative Representative for the Connecticut State Firefighters Association. Our Association represents approximately 26,000 career and volunteer firefighters in Connecticut. I appreciate the opportunity to address your committee regarding the subject bill.

I must first mention that the title of this bill may be a little misleading. Currently there are approximately 22,000 public safety personnel already using blue lights. They are known as **VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS**. I feel safe in saying that a very great majority of these dedicated volunteers display a blue light on their personal vehicles.

**This blue light has become the distinguishing factor, the identifier of a volunteer firefighter.**

**We respectfully request that you delete that portion of this bill that would expand the use of blue flashing lights to any other group of individuals except volunteer firefighters. Its passage could cause much confusion to Connecticut's motorists, and have a serious detrimental effect on the quality of service provided by volunteer firefighters in the State of Connecticut.**

In a report entitled **"Report of the Flashing Light Task Force"** pursuant to Public Act 03-265, one of their requirements was to study the safety risks and benefits of the use of flashing or revolving lights. One of the risks listed on page 10 of the report states, "There is a lack of awareness on the part of the public of the types of vehicles authorized to use flashing or revolving lights. This is compounded by the number of such vehicles on the road." Additionally on page 15 of the same report states, "The Task Force recognized a lack of public awareness on how to respond to approaching vehicles displaying a flashing or revolving blue or green light". We feel that this legislation would add to the confusion that already exists.

I do not wish to diminish the activities of the listed groups as each of us has their own mission, but I would question whether a flashing blue light would provide the level of urgency they feel they need. In responding to any emergency, personnel would still be required to stop at any traffic control lights and signs, and obey all legal speed limits. Other motorists are not required to move to the right or give the right of way to the responder. Most Chief Fire Officers will tell you that there are a number of motorists that will not even move to the side of the road for a large fire truck with **RED** lights. I also think you will find that most law enforcement officers and DMV officials will state that the blue light for firefighters is only considered a means of identification and does not allow that person to disregard any motor vehicle laws or statutes.

Presently, volunteer firefighters use their blue lights to respond to emergencies within their own communities. This legislation could result in these search & rescue teams responding in civilian vehicles across multiple municipal jurisdictions over a much larger portion of the state. I would also suggest that at any time an emergency response is required by these teams, local firefighter first responders would already be at the emergency scene.

We would not oppose any attempt by these teams to use another color of flashing light. In fact, one of these groups already has a flashing colored green light assigned as an identifier by the DMV. We respectfully request that you do not pass this bill as proposed. We feel it would not accomplish what the teams expect to achieve and will tend to further confuse the motoring public.

Respectfully Submitted

Ted Schroll Jr., Legislative Representative  
Connecticut State Firefighters Association

We deeply regret having to oppose a portion of this legislation, as we feel like comrades in arms with the National Guard. We are both out on the home front protecting the safety of Connecticut's citizens.

The motoring public has gotten accustomed to associating blue lights with volunteer firefighters. For this fact alone, we respectfully oppose this attempt to expand the use of blue lights. However, we submit the following additional information.